The Management Excellence Framework

A Competency-Based Model of Effective Performance for Federal Managers

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Overview of the Framework

A Competency-Based Model. Under its guidelines published in FPM Chapter 412 on Executive, Management, and Supervisory Development, in the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is responsible for developing and maintaining a competency-based model of effective performance for Federal executives, managers, and supervisors. The Management Excellence Framework (MEF) is that model.

Focus on Managerial Performance. The most critical information needed for successfully designing, implementing, and evaluating career development programs for executives, managers, and supervisors addresses the question of what managers must be able to do to be effective. The Management Excellence Framework (MEF), a research-based conceptual model of managerial performance developed by OPM, consolidates such information for the Federal government. The MEF describes management jobs and managerial performance in a way that distinguishes those elements that are necessary to achieve management excellence—those managerial actions that result in the successful implementation and administration of Federal policies and programs—by focusing on the *who*, *what*, and *how* of Federal managerial performance.

A Descriptive Model. The MEF, a descriptive model, is based on an OPM program of research designed to identify common tasks and actions required of Federal managers in a wide variety of settings. As the research developed, those common elements were confirmed and grouped into a structure that ultimately became the MEF. To simplify the model, broad categories of tasks and practices were developed.

A Three-Dimensional Model. The MEF organizes its elements along three dimensions:

- —**Management Functions** covering the *"what"* or content of management work—tasks, roles, and responsibilities;
- —**Effectiveness Characteristics** describing the *"how"* or style of effective managers—their skills, attitudes and perspectives; and
- —**Management Levels** indicating the *"who"* of the Federal management team—its executives, managers, and supervisors.

Figure 1 depicts the framework and its component dimensions. The MEF's elements establish a common language that permits meaningful comparisons across the immense variety of Federal management positions. They can also be used to differentiate managers and describe the performance expected of particular individuals or groups in distinctive terms. The framework's elements are always easily translated back into specific competencies.

Agency Use of the Framework

Using the MEF, each agency and field activity can design and implement a career development system for its management team. The MEF was developed to help agencies implement and comply with the guidance in FPM Chapter 412.

Specifically, agencies can:

- —Save staff and managerial time that would be required for analyzing the major competencies of individual management positions to establish a competency base for designing, implementing and evaluating appropriate career development strategies for executives, managers, and supervisors.
- —Solve the problem of how to understand and structure information about what managers do and to use it for measuring or monitoring the progress of career development efforts and assessing organizational impact.
- —Clarify roles and responsibilities within the management team, especially at different levels to identify key career transitions.
- —Assess the distribution of management competencies within the management team.
- —Surface areas of developmental needs for groups and individuals.
- —Identify appropriate developmental approaches to fulfill particular needs.
- —Provide a competency-based structure for designing and evaluating training courses and other developmental activities.
- —Establish a foundation for comparing management jobs, training needs, and developmental activities across agencies and field activities, so organizations can use each other's program resources and share production costs.

The Management Excellence Framework

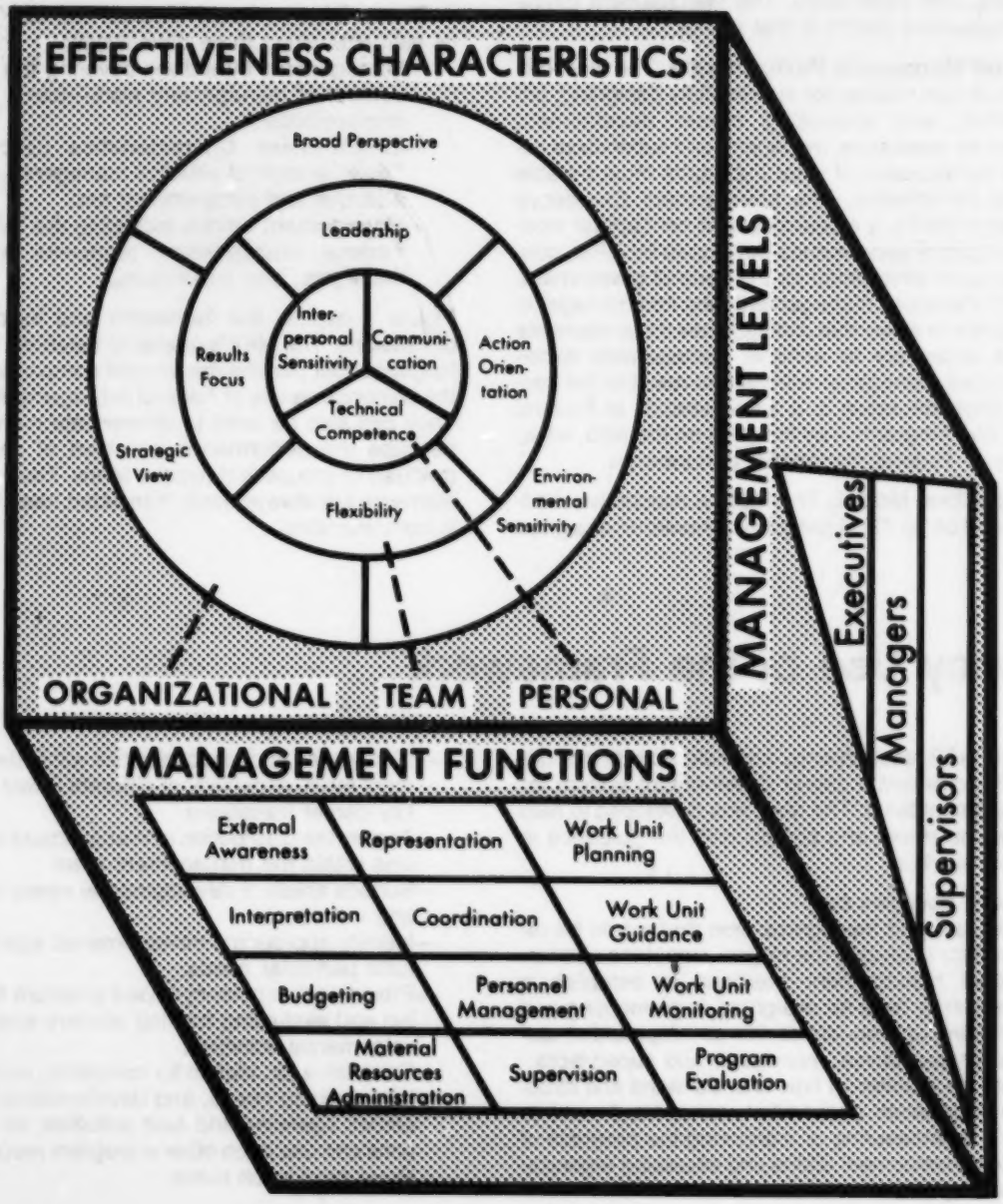

Figure 1

Related OPM Guidance Describing Management Performance

The MEF's description of effective management performance is consistent with OPM policy and guidance published elsewhere with respect to other personnel management functions and purposes. For example, in the general staffing area, materials on both qualification and classification standards reflect the domains of managerial performance the MEF describes. The Qualifications Review Board uses six executive activity or competency areas to certify the qualifications of candidates for initial career appointment to the Senior Executive Service:

I. Integrating Internal and External Issues
II. Representing and Coordinating
III. Planning and Guiding
IV. Administering Money and Material Resources
V. Utilizing Human Resources
VI. Reviewing Implementation and Results

These six competency areas were derived from the same research on which the MEF is based. They correspond directly to pairs of the management functions and also capture the effectiveness characteristics of the MEF.

At the manager and supervisor levels, the *X-118 Qualification Standard Handbook* includes a section on "Supervisory Positions in General Schedule Occupations," which describes managerial and supervisory responsibilities and the abilities and attributes candidates must demonstrate to qualify for supervisory positions in grade GS/GM-15 and below. The position classification standard contained in OPM's *Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide* defines and distinguishes the duties and responsibilities of managerial and supervisory positions; the level distinctions made there have been adopted for the MEF. In the performance appraisal area, OPM's publication, *Appraising Managerial Performance. . . . Suggested Elements and Standards for Executives, Managers, and Supervisors*, provides generic criteria for common job responsibilities and basic management activities. In each of these issuances, the language used to describe the responsibilities and successful performance of Federal managers is congruent with MEF language and concepts.

Dimensions of the Framework

Management Functions. The first dimension of the MEF describes *what* executives, managers, and supervisors do and comprises twelve general management functions. This dimension covers the content and nature of management work in the Federal sector—executive, managerial, and supervisory (E-M-S) tasks, roles, and responsibilities. Figure 2 defines the twelve management functions.

Effectiveness Characteristics. The second dimension of the MEF describes *how* successful executives, managers, and supervisors perform using skills, attitudes, and perspectives that increase the likelihood of effective performance. Related components of management effectiveness are grouped into ten general effectiveness characteristics. Those ten characteristics are then clustered according to the individual, work unit or organizational performance level for which the management team is responsible and where the characteristics become critical to success. Figure 3 provides the characteristics and their key component skills, attitudes, and perspectives, and shows how they are clustered.

Figure 3's visual representation of these characteristic clusters as concentric circles or rings illustrates an important point about the relationships among the clusters: the need for these characteristics is generally cumulative as a manager becomes responsible for the performance of larger units. In other words, first-line supervisors must apply their communication skills, interpersonal sensitivity, and technical competence to assure excellent personal performance for themselves and by their individual subordinates. In addition, their actions must begin to reflect the characteristics from the next cluster (or ring, in figure 3) to produce effective work unit performance. Managers must display the characteristics from the two central clusters (personal and team effectiveness) and begin to apply the characteristics that affect the performance of the larger organizations they manage. Finally, executive performance, which explicitly is to be judged against organizational performance criteria, must reflect the full range of effectiveness characteristics.

This dimension of the MEF recognizes that management excellence requires more than just *doing* a set of management functions. It requires doing them *well*. The effectiveness characteristics capture the management styles that distinguish high performing executives, managers, and supervisors.

Management Content Dimension of the MEF

Management Functions

External Awareness: Identifying and keeping up-to-date with key agency policies and priorities and/or external issues and trends (e.g., economic, political, social, technological) likely to affect the work unit.

Interpretation: Keeping subordinates informed about key agency and work unit policies, priorities, issues, and trends and how these are to be incorporated in work unit activities and products.

Representation: Presenting, explaining, selling, and defending the work unit's activities to supervisor, others in the agency, and/or persons and groups outside the agency.

Coordination: Performing liaison functions and integrating work unit activities with the activities of other organizations.

Work Unit Planning: Developing and deciding upon longer-term goals, objectives, and priorities; and developing and deciding among alternative courses of action.

Work Unit Guidance: Converting plans to actions by setting short-term objectives and priorities; scheduling/sequencing activities; and establishing effectiveness and efficiency standards/guidelines.

Budgeting: Preparing, justifying, and/or administering the work unit's budget.

Material Resources Administration: Assuring the availability of adequate supplies, equipment, facilities; overseeing procurement/contracting activities; and/or overseeing logistical operations.

Personnel Management: Projecting the number and types of staff needed by the work unit, and using various personnel management system components (e.g., recruitment, selection, promotion, performance appraisal) in managing the work unit.

Supervision: Providing day-to-day guidance and oversight of subordinates (e.g., work assignments, consultation, etc.); and actively working to promote and recognize performance.

Work Unit Monitoring: Keeping up-to-date on the overall status of activities in the work unit, identifying problem areas, and taking corrective actions (e.g., rescheduling, reallocating resources, etc.).

Program Evaluation: Critically assessing the degree to which program/project goals are achieved and overall effectiveness/efficiency of work unit operations, to identify means for improving work unit performance.

Note: Each management level does not necessarily perform *all* the aspects of each function as described here.

External Awareness	**Representation**	**Work Unit Planning**
Interpretation	**Coordination**	**Work Unit Guidance**
Budgeting	**Personnel Management**	**Work Unit Monitoring**
Material Resources Administration	**Supervision**	**Program Evaluation**

Figure 2

Management Effectiveness Dimension of the MEF

Effectiveness Characteristics

Broad Perspective:	Broad, long-term view; balancing short- and long-term considerations.
Strategic View:	Collecting/assessing/analyzing information; problem identification/ analysis; anticipation, judgment.
Environmental Sensitivity:	"Tuned into" agency and its environment; awareness of importance of non-technical factors.
Leadership:	Individual, group; willingness to lead, manage, and accept responsibility.
Flexibility:	Openness to new information; behavioral flexibility; tolerance for stress/ambiguity/change; innovativeness.
Action Orientation:	Independence, proactivity; problem solving; calculated risk-taking, decisiveness.
Results Focus:	Concerned with goal achievement; follow through, tenacity.
Communication:	Speaking; writing; listening.
Interpersonal Sensitivity:	Self-knowledge and awareness of impact on others; sensitivity to needs/strengths/weaknesses of others; negotiation, conflict resolution; persuasion, selling.
Technical Competence:	Specialized expertise (e.g., engineering, physical science, law, accounting, social science).

Note: Each management level does not necessarily perform *all* the aspects of each characteristic as described here.

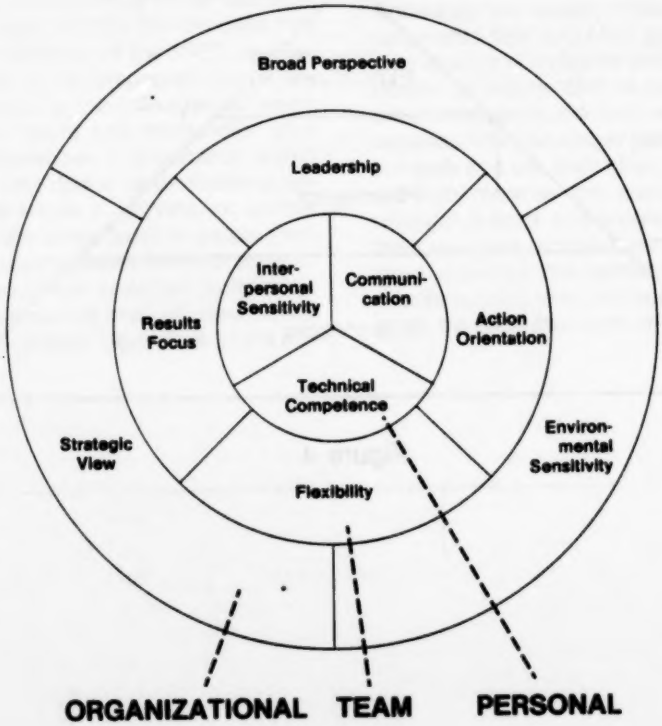

Figure 3

Management Level. The third dimension of the MEF covers *who* the executives, managers, and supervisors are—three groups or levels of managers whose performance the overall framework describes. The distinctions between levels are made most clearly in terms of differences in the substance of jobs at each level. That is, at higher levels, job duties and requirements change in scope and breadth and not just in their intensity or technical subject matter. Thus, if a person moves from supervising three people to supervising thirty, but the job still requires only a narrow focus on immediate work unit production, the person is still considered a supervisor. The traditional hierarchical pyramid depicting these groups in figure 4 conveys their supervisor-subordinate relationships as well as their relative numbers.

Management Level Dimension of the MEF

Management Levels

Executives: Have the most complex jobs and generally are members of the Senior Executive Service.

Managers: Have broader, more complex responsibilities than supervisors; become more involved in coordinating the work of others and dealing with longer-range issues than supervisors; may or may not manage subordinate supervisors.

Supervisors: Have first-level responsibility for managing day-to-day operations and carrying out directives from higher management.

Figure 4

Source of the Framework: The Research Base

OPM's Systematic Research Program. The MEF is the product of a systematic research effort that began in 1978. Its goal was to address the question described earlier concerning what managers must do to be effective. A variety of research methods and sources have contributed to the development of the MEF. Original research on the jobs and roles of Federal managers used a standardized survey instrument and a Governmentwide sample of managers. In-depth critical incident interview studies focused on the performance of several different groups of executives, managers, and supervisors, including individuals identified as superior performers. The research results of other Federal management studies and private sector studies, as well as current private sector theories of management effectiveness, were reviewed carefully for their cross-validation of the findings and directions that were emerging from OPM's data. Subsequent field studies and applications of these results have provided continual testing and validation for the MEF. As a result, the MEF has a solid empirical basis that both demonstrates its consistency with other emerging theories of management competencies and gives it unique relevance for the Federal government.

Research Results Relevant to E-M-S Career Development. A set of research findings from several studies have been integrated and applied to the MEF in a way particularly germane to E-M-S career development concerns. While many factors can be observed and tracked across the elements of the MEF, assessing the *relative importance* of its component competencies for the different groups in the management team is useful in charting the nature and progression of a management career. Differences in importance *within* a level of management help define its particular qualities and demands. Differences in importance *across* management levels provide sharp focus to career transitions by specifying the competencies in which advancing managers must develop new or added proficiency. Figure 5 summarizes a substantial body of research evidence in its display of the relative importance of the elements of the framework as reported by respondents. Estimates of importance were based on time devoted to an element and the scope and impact of job responsibilities, roles, and functions.

Management Function Importance. As figure 5 indicates, supervisors have the most limited range of management responsibilities. Thus, Management Functions 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8 (see figure 2 for reference) are of relatively little importance; Management Functions 4, 5, and 12 are of moderate importance; and Management Functions 6, 9, 10, and 11 are of great importance. For managers, no management function is of less than moderate importance. This change implies some development of Management Functions 1—5, 7, 8, and 12 upon transition to the manager level. At the executive level, all twelve management functions are judged to be of great importance, given the scope and impact of the responsibilities that these jobs generally have.

Effectiveness Characteristic Importance. The pattern of relative importance of the effectiveness characteristics by level is similar to that of the management functions. As the scope of job responsibilities, roles, and impact increases, a richer variety of skills, attitudes, and perspectives must be displayed for effective performance on the job. The one exception to this pattern occurs with "Technical Competence." For supervisors, technical competence is of great importance since they are usually called upon to make technical judgments daily and often continue to perform a significant amount of technical work. As management responsibility broadens and increases, however, technical details recede in the daily world of managers and executives. They no longer personally perform the technical work and use their other, managerial competencies relatively more as they ensure the effective implementation of policies and programs. Managers and executives use their technical competence and skills in new ways and within the context of a manager's (rather than a technician's) role, principally by directing and evaluating the technical work of others.

Management Excellence Framework

Comparison by Level

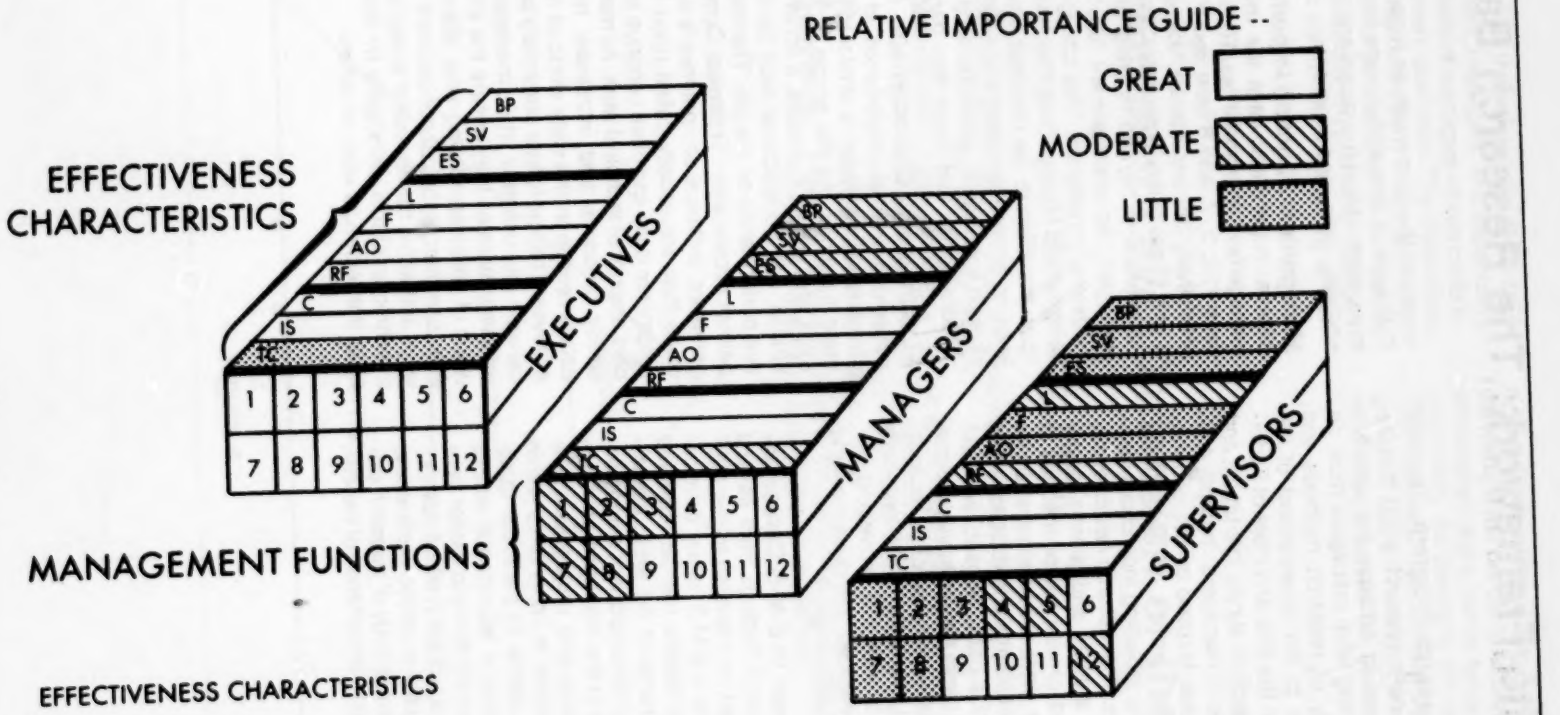

Figure 5

EFFECTIVENESS CHARACTERISTICS

- BP -- BROAD PERSPECTIVE
- SV -- STRATEGIC VIEW
- ES -- ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY
- L -- LEADERSHIP
- F -- FLEXIBILITY
- AO -- ACTION ORIENTATION
- RF -- RESULTS FOCUS
- C -- COMMUNICATION
- IS -- INTERPERSONAL SENSITIVITY
- TC -- TECHNICAL COMPETENCE

MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

1. EXTERNAL AWARENESS
2. INTERPRETATON
3. REPRESENTATION
4. COORDINATION
5. WORK UNIT PLANNING
6. WORK UNIT GUIDANCE
7. BUDGETING
8. MATERIAL RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION
9. PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
10. SUPERVISION
11. WORK UNIT MONITORING
12. PROGRAM EVALUATION

Applications of the Framework

Management Excellence Inventory. OPM has developed the Management Excellence Inventory (MEI) questionnaire as a primary tool for translating the general concepts of the MEF to specific management performance in defined organizational settings. Agencies can use the MEI to focus on and compare the distinctive competency requirements for Federal managers at different levels and career stages and in different organizational situations. Its principal use is to identify organizational (as well as specific individual) development needs and strengths. The MEI measures the components of the MEF by breaking them down into specific task and activity statements, which were identified as part of OPM's larger research program, and uses a system for establishing importance levels that are specific to the organization (or particular jobs). Figure 6 gives an example of how the MEI measures the framework. Because the MEI systematically measures the requirements of the respondents' positions, assessments of development needs are automatically tailored to the unique aspects of each setting. In addition, an agency may add task and action statements as well as demographic questions that are specific to its needs. The MEI is published in two editions, one for executives and managers, and one for supervisors.

How the Management Excellence Inventory Measures Elements of the Management Excellence Framework

An Example:

Management Function	MEI Items
Program Evaluation: *Critically assessing the degree to which program/ project goals are achieved and the overall effectiveness/efficiency of work unit operations, to identify means for improving work unit performance.*	*61. Identify ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of work unit operations.* *62. Critically and realistically assess the overall effectiveness of work unit.* *63. Use project or job reviews or other evaluation information to improve work unit operations.* *64. Assess progress toward achieving work unit goals.* *65. Identify ways to improve work unit procedures, processes, or structure.*

Figure 6

National Management Career Curriculum. OPM develops and maintains a Governmentwide curriculum specifying the management competencies that need to be acquired at each level of management. Particular course offerings and other developmental experiences are keyed to those requirements. This approach, used with a needs assessment process grounded in the MEF, provides significant support for more efficient and effective allocation of E-M-S career development resources throughout the Federal government.

For More Information. Information about OPM training courses and other services relating to E-M-S career development can be obtained by contacting:

Chief, Policy and Systems Division
Office of Training and Development
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
P.O. Box 7230
Washington, D.C. 20044

or the OPM regional training office that services your area.

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